

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRIDGE 00019 061412Z

44

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 /080 W

----- 121531

R 052028Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0088

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

USUN NEW YORK 0265

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 0019

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV,AC

SUBJ: ANTIGUA CONTEMPLATES INDEPENDENCE

1. BACK FROM LONDON WHERE HE HAD GONE TO TALK INDEPENDENCE, PREMIER GEORGE WALTER OF ANTIGUA ANNOUNCED ACCORDING TO PRESS AND BROADCAST REPORTS ON DECEMBER 28 THAT THE ISLAND WOULD BECOME INDEPENDENT IN 1976 AFTER THE GENERAL ELECTIONS (EXPECTED TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY); AND THAT A REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE WAS NOT REQUIRED AND WOULD NOT BE HELD; THE ELECTIONS THEMSELVES WOULD BE A MANDATE FOR WALTER AND HIS GOVT TO TAKE THE COUNTRY TO INDEPENDENCE. WALTER SAID THAT A REFERENDUM WOULD HAVE AN UNSETTLING EFFECT AND DAMAGE THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE OF THE COUNTRY. HE POINTED OUT THAT NO FORMER BRITISH DEPENDENCY IN THE CARIBBEAN HAD ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE THROUGH REFERENDUM.

2. WHILE THE PREMIER REJECTED THE REFERENDUM AS A PATH TO INDEPENDENCE, HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT "IT WOULD BE VERY WRONG FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO FORCE INDEPENDENCE ON THE PEOPLE."

3. COMMENT: THERE IS LITTLE THAT IS NEW OR ASTONISHING HERE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRIDGE 00019 061412Z

WALTER HAD ALREADY SAID THAT HIS GOVT WAS BENT ON IN-

DEPENDENCE IN THE COMING YEAR, AND WITHOUT REFERENDUM. WHILE IN ANTIGUA EARLIER THIS MONTH, GOVERNOR SIR WILFRED JACOBS AND ROBERT GILLET, THE DEPUTY BRITISH GOVT REP, SEPARATELY TOLD EMBASSY OFFS THAT WALTER INTENDED TO GO TO INDEPENDENCE AND WITHOUT REFERENDUM BECAUSE, WHILE MOST OF THE ELECTORATE DESIRED OR WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO INDEPENDENCE, THE GOVT COULD NOT OBTAIN THE NECESSARY TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FOR IT. (THE OPPOSITION PUBLICLY SUPPORTS INDEPENDENCE BUT, IN FACT, HAS DOUBTS AS TO THE WISDOM OF SUCH A MOVE AND OPPOSES INDEPENDENCE UNDER A WALTER GOVT.) THERE ARE A FEW CURIOSITIES IN THE PREMIER'S REMARKS. THAT WARNING TO BRITAIN THAT IT SHOULD NOT FORCE INDEPENDENCE ON THE PEOPLE: WE SUSPECT THAT WALTER HAD NOT BEEN ALTOGETHER PREPARED FOR THE DEGREE OF WILLINGNESS EXPRESSED BY THE UK GOVT TO FACILITATE ANTIGUAN INDEPENDENCE. THE BRITISH ARE NO DOUBT MILDLY DESIROUS THAT ALL GOES ACCORDING TO FORM, THAT A REFERENDUM AS PROVIDED BY THE 1967 ASSOCIATED STATES ACT BE HELD. HOWEVER THEY ARE INFINITELY KEENER ON CUTTING THE TIES. GILLET TOLD US RECENTLY THAT IF THEY (THE GOVTS OF THE ASSOCIATED STATES) DEMAND INDEPENDENCE, "THEY ARE KNOCKING ON AN UNLOCKED DOOR."

WALTERS' ASSERTION THAT NO COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN ISLAND HAS ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE THROUGH REFERENDUM IS CORRECT. HOWEVER, ONLY ONE OF THE ISLANDS HAS GONE INDEPENDENT SINCE ASSOCIATED STATEHOOD HAS COME INTO BEING -- GRENADA.

4. THE PREMIER'S SOLICITUDE ABOUT THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IS AMUSING. HIS GOVT HAS JUST SUCCESSFULLY PUT THE SQUEEZE ON THE LARGEST ENTERPRISE ON THE ISLAND, THE WEST INDIAN OIL COMPANY, OWNED BY NATOMAS OF THE UNITED STATES. THE COMPANY IS WILLING TO PULL-OUT AND AT A BARGAIN PRICE FOR ANTIGUA--TEN MILLION DOLLARS, ACCORDING TO THE ADVOCATE-NEWS OF DECEMBER 29.

5. WE EXPECT ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE IN FEBRUARY AND THAT THE GOVT WILL BE RETURNED, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT A SURE THING. (IN THE MEANTIME, THE NUMBER OF VISA APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO THE EMBASSY'S CONSULAR SECTION DETECT A MOVE-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRIDGE 00019 061412Z

MENT OF MONIED ANTIGUANS OUT OF THE ISLAND.) ANTIGUA WILL THEN BE SET TO BECOME THE NEXT ISLAND TO BECOME INDEPENDENT. PROBABLY THE ONLY ONE IN 1976, ALTHOUGH THE OTHER ASSOCIATED STATES ARE SURE TO FOLLOW, BEGINNING WITH ST. LUCIA BEFORE, WE ESTIMATE, 1977 IS OUT. END COMMENT. BRITTON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, POLICIES, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BRIDGE00019
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760003-1060
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760187/aaaaczmn.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANTIGUA CONTEMPLATES INDEPENDENCE
TAGS: PDEV, AC, (WALTER, GEORGE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006